

**SPEECH UPON RECEIVING THE  
LATIN AMERICAN LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION  
RICARDO ESQUIVEL AWARD**

ON MARCH 20TH, 2003  
MEDITARRANEAN MANOR  
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

**BUENAS NOCHES Y QUE DIOS BENDIGA A TODOS AQUI Y  
AQUELLOS EN LA GUERRA/GUERRA QUE SE APROXIMA.**

**GOOD EVENING AND MAY GOD BLESS ALL OF THOSE HERE  
AND THOSE IN THE WAR/COMING WAR.**

**THIS IS IS A VERY SPECIAL MOMENT FOR ME, FOR I WAS AN  
ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE THEN NAMED "SPANISH-  
AMERICAN LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION"—BETTER  
KNOWN AS " salsa".**

**YOU MAY ASK , AND I ASK, WHY IS AMILKAR VELEZ-LOPEZ  
HERE TONIGHT.**

**\*\*THE MAIN REASON IS DUE TO MIGUEL SALVADOR VELEZ  
AND EMILIA AMERICA LOPEZ, MY PARENTS. THEY HAVE  
BEEN AN INSPIRATION FOR ME TO EXCEL IN ANY ENDEAVOR  
THAT I UNDERTAKE,**

- 1. FROM GOING TO KINDERGARTEN IN BARRIO  
YAHUECAS, ADJUNTAS, PR , AT A TIME WHEN NO SUCH  
THING EXISTED IN PR, IN 1951**
- 2. . TO ORGANIZING THE BORINQUEN ASPIRA SOCIETY AT  
GEORGE WASHINGTON HS IN NY,**
- 3. TO GRADUATING CUM LAUDE FROM INTERAMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY IN 1968,**
- 4. TO GRADUATING FROM COLUMBIA UNIV. SCHOOL OF  
SOCIAL WORK IN 1970**
- 5. TO GRADUATING FROM SETON HALL LAW SCHOOL,  
CUM LAUDE , IN 1979, WHILE WORKING AND STUDYING,  
AND BEING A FATHER TO MY BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN,  
AND BEING INVOLVED IN POLITICS, CREATING**

COMMUNITY AGENCIES, SUCH AS CASA DON PEDRO, INC. C.U.R.A., INC., THE NEWARK BORINQUEN LIONS CLUB, THE PUERTO RICAN COALITION FOR PROGRESS IN PATERSON , N.J., ETC.

ANOTHER REASON IS THE SUPPORT FROM MY CHILDREN, MY FIRST DAUGHTER,-- MYRNA ARSENET MILLS-- MY SON,-- NEWARK POLICE SARGEANT AMILKAR MIGUEL VELEZ-- AND MY "ULTIMA EDICION FINAL"-- KATILIA YUISA VELEZ, WHO IS STUDENT AND AN ASPIRING ACTRESS AND WRITER.

ANOTHER REASON IS THE SUPPORT FROM UNCLES SUCH AS TIO DAMIAN, PADRINO OSCAR, AUNTS SUCH AS TIA CHENO, TIA RATE MORALES, COUSINS AND MANY FRIENDS, WHO THROUGH ADVISE, MONETARY HELP, OPENING THEIR HOMES AND OTHERWISE PROVIDING ASSISTANCE HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE.

TEACHERS AND PROFESSORS HAVE ALSO BEEN INSTRUMENTAL. I SHALL NEVER FORGET A HS TEACHER, MR. BUDOFKY AND MR. RUBIN AT GEORGE WASHINGTON HS , IN MANHATTAN, NY. BY THE SAME TOKEN I SHALL NEVER FORGET MY GUIDANCE COUNSELOR, WHO SHALL REMAIN NAMELESS, SINCE SHE DESERVES IT, THAT TOLD MY PARENTS TO TAKE ME OUT OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM IN HS AND PUT ME IN A GENERAL COURSE, SINCE I "WOULD NEVER AMOUNT TO MUCH", MAY GOD FORGIVE HER RACISM , IGNORANCE AND THE MENTAL ABUSE SHE PUT MY PARENTS, THROUGH. FORTUNATELY, MY PARENTS WERE ALWAYS FIGHTERS AND PREVENTED THAT ACTION.

MENTORS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF A PERSON'S LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. *L. Salas*

1. BESIDES MR. RUBIN IN HIGH SCHOOL, ~~HE~~ *HE* ALSO HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE HAD OTHER MENTORS.
2. IAU PROFESSOR MRS. WALKER WAS ONE THAT ALWAYS ENCOURAGED ME AND TOOK TIME TO TALK TO ME ABOUT MY SCHOOL WORK AND FUTURE GOALS.

3. AT COLUMBIA UNIV. I HAD PROFESSOR JOSEFINA NIEVES WHO WAS VERY ENCOURAGING AND PROVIDED GUIDANCE WHEN I PREPARED A STUDY OF THE PUERTO RICAN COMMUNITY OF PATERSON IN 1969, WHICH I BELIEVE MAY BE IN USE AT THE CUSSW LIBRARY. I ALSO REMEMBER MY 'COUNSELOR' WHO WAS SO NICE AS TO FILE A COMPLAINT TO TRY TO EXPEL ME FROM CUSSW, BECAUSE I WOULD "NEVER BECOME A SOCIAL WORKER", OF COURSE AT THE TIME THERE WERE ABOUT 7 PUERTO RICAN STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL, BUT THE WORD= "RACISM" WAS OMITTED FROM THE EFFORT. THE ONLY REASON I DID NOT GRADUATE WITH HONORS FROM CUSSW, WAS SIMPLY RACISM. I DID GRADUATE AND BECAME A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF PR SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS AND A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOC. OF SOCIAL WORKERS, OBTAINED MY NJ SOCIAL WORK LICENSE AND PARTICIPATED IN A VARIOUS PROGRAMS WITH THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AS A PRESENTER.
4. AT SETON HALL LAW SCHOOL I SHALL NEVER FORGET THE WORK OF SUCH WONDERFUL PERSONS AS PROF. BOSKEY, PROF. WILKERSON, DEAN DIAB, PROF. STANTON AND\_\_\_\_\_
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THEY BECAME MENTORS AND FRIENDS, ALWAYS GIVING GOOD ADVISE AND SUPPORTING THE CAUSE OF HISPANIC AMERICAN LAW STUDENTS. ONE OF THE BEST FRIENDS WE EVER HAD WAS RICARDO ESQUIVEL. HE WAS ALWAYS THERE, AS THE PHRASE GOES, HE STRUGGLED TO OPEN THE DOOR SO OTHER HISPANICS WOULD ENTER SETON HALL LS. I REMEMBER THAT WHEN I WAS THERE WERE TWO PR NIGHT STUDENTS, FELIX LOPEZ-MONTALVO AND ME. THE HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, NOW THE 12<sup>TH</sup> CD REPRESENTATIVE, WAS A DAY STUDENT. I BELIEVE THAT YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COUNT ALL HISPANIC STUDENTS THERE WITH JUST TWO MANOS.

AT THAT TIME WE HAD S.A.L.S.A., AND I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE HONORED WITH THE EUGENIO MARIA DE HOSTOS AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE UPON MY GRADUATION.

UNFORTUNATELY, TO COUNTER BALANCE THE EFFORTS OF RICARDO ESQUEVEL WE HAD OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL. I SHALL NEVER FORGET MY CIVIL PROCEDURES PROFESSOR . AT THAT TIME THE TERM PAPERS AND/OR TEST WERE GRADED BY UTILIZING THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER AS YOUR ID NUMBER. EVENTHOUGH I KNEW MY WORK, I STILL RECEIVED A "C+" FROM HIM ~~AND~~ SINCE I HAD SOME = "RUN INS" WITH HIM PRIOR TO THE FINAL GRADE BEEN GIVEN. BY THE WAY SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS ARE ASSIGNED BY GEOGRAPHIC AREAS, SO PUERTO RICO HAD MOST OF THE NUMBERS BEGGING WITH 581, OR 583, SO ANYONE COULD SEPARATE THIS NUMBER FROM THE LOCAL NUMBERS AND DETERMINE WHO WAS THE KID FROM PUERTO RICO.

LUCKILY THAT PERSON WAS "PROMOTED" AND ANOTHER PROFESSOR TOOK OVER THE COURSE AND THE NEXT SEMESTER I HAD MY "A".

MENTORS WILL ALSO BE NEEDED WHEN YOU GRADUATE.

MY MENTOR SINCE I BECAME AN ATTORNEY IS THE HONORABLE JULIO FUENTES , PRESENTLY WITH THE THIRD CIRCUIT , UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS, WHICH COVERS DELAWARE, NEW JERSEY, PENNSYLVANIA AND THE VIRGIN ISLANDS. HIS OFFICE IS HERE IN NEWARK, NEW JERSEY. HE HELPED ME WITH THE FIRST CLOSING I EVER DID AND THROUGHOUT MY LAST 23 YEARS HAS ADVISED, ENCOURAGED AND OTHERWISE HELPED ME IN MY CAREER.

HE BECAME A NEWARK MUNICIPAL JUDGE, THEN A SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE IN ESSEX COUNTY AND IS THE FIRST PUERTO RICAN TO BE APPOINTED TO THE THIRD CIRCUIT, PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WITH A HEARTFELT APPLAUSE. HE HAD ALSO REMAINED ACTIVE IN ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE NEWARK

BORINQUEN LIONS CLUBS AND OTHERS, UNTIL HE WAS APPOINTED TO THE BENCH.

ANOTHER MENTOR HAS BEEN R. MARTIN OLIVERAS. A PUERTO RICAN, WHO BECAME AN ENGINEER, A PATENT ATTORNEY, A JUDGE, A PRACTICING ATTORNEY AND A MEDICAL DOCTOR. TALK ABOUT SOMEONE WITH PERSEVERANCE, HE BEATS ME BY A MILE. HE HAS ALWAYS REMAINED A HUMBLE AND SIMPLE PERSON.

SO WHY AM I HERE. BECAUSE OF ALL OF THE ABOVE AND BECAUSE MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME A LESSON THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET—EL QUE PERSEVERA-SIEMPRE TRIUNFA

OR "HE WHO PERSEVERES—SHALL ALWAYS TRIUMPH".  
*I have explained some*

NEVER GIVE UP, NO MATTER WHAT OBSTACLES COME YOUR WAY.

WHETHER RACISM, SEXISM, SEXUAL ORIENTATION DISCRIMINATION, RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION, CLASS DISCRIMINATION, NEVER EVER LET AN IDIOT STOP YOU. IF I, OR MY PARENTS HAD PERMITTED THAT, I WOULD NOT BE HERE TODAY TO SAY PROUDLY THAT I AM A HISPANIC-AMERICAN OF PUERTO RICAN ANCESTRY, SERVING THE PEOPLE AS A NEWARK MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGE, FATHER OF TWO WONDERFUL DAUGHTERS AND A SON, GRANDFATHER OF ISABELLA MIA AND MICHAEL RALEIGH, FRIEND OF MANY AND ADOPTED FATHER FIGURE TO HUNDREDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE. WHO ALSO SERVES AS ONE OF THE THREE MACIC KINGS ON JANURAY 6, OF EACH YEAR FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS, AND JUST A HUMAN BEING WHOI TRIES TO DO THS BEST FOR THE COMMUNITY AND THE FAMILY.  
QUE DIOS ME LOS BENDIGA, MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL AGAIN.